Sterling
Backcheck

HR's Guide to Onboarding

From Hiring Decision to Day One and Beyond

A Look Inside…

The Candidate Experience

Onboarding is an important step in the candidate experience and for creating an authentic connection from Day One.

Day One:
The Journey Begins

Starting a new job gives us something to celebrate! Many days are a blur, but one always stands out: your first.

Impact of Onboarding
to the Bottom Line

New employee onboarding programs can have a positive impact on your business's bottom line.

Importance of
Employee Engagement

In a remote-first world, it's vital to build connections, boost engagement, and improve the employee experience.

Onboarding Best Practices

Create a process that will save time, smooth the transition, and set the stage for long-term productive teamwork.

Technology with a
Human Touch

Technology can help facilitate the onboarding process, but doesn't replace the human side of the experience.

TIPS & TEMPLATES

**Creating a 30/60/90
Day Plan**

Onboarding Don'ts

Onboarding Checklist

**Tips for the
HR Software Buyer**

**Metrics to Measure
Onboarding Success**

The Candidate Experience

Employers must ensure the candidate experience is positive across different work models (including onsite, hybrid, remote, gig, and contract work). Today's candidates are seeking the most convenient path to their ideal job, so offering a seamless, modern experience is vital.

How Important Is the Candidate Experience?

Candidates surveyed in Sterling's "Hiring Reimagined" Industry Report were asked:

"What is one thing you wish organizations and HR professionals understood better about the hiring experience from the perspective of a job/work candidate?"

Time

" Companies should prioritize ways to shorten the screening period."

Humanity

" Understand the applicant's true abilities and potential."

Choice

" HR professionals need to understand that candidates are always applying for multiple jobs."

Communication

" It's important to [have] clear, honest, and consistent communication with the candidate… [about] the status of our application."

Talent Board's "Candidate Experience Resentment Calculator" shows just how much a poor experience could cost your organization. Conversely, if candidates have a positive experience, they can act as a strong referral source for other candidates.

■ **Remember:**

The window of time between the interview and the job offer is critical. Keep the timeline tight and on track in order to remain competitive.

Onboarding is not just a function of the Human Resources department. Good onboarding requires input from many different cross-functional team members, from leadership to site leaders to IT to Marketing.

Recently there has been a shift to re-classify the HR team as the "Talent Team," "People Team," or "Employee Experience Team." Regardless of name, your team's success still stems from creating the best candidate and employee experience possible.

First Impressions and Pre-Onboarding
How Should This Look in Practice?

"Things need to be handled in a reasonable amount of time," says **Ebony Brumfield, Employment Practices and Compliance Manager at W. W. Grainger**. "Ultimately, if I'm not able to get key information over to the people who need it in a timely manner in order to make a hiring decision, that affects my brand. Candidates may become impatient if things take too long, and that can leave them with a negative impression about our company."

Read **how Sterling helped Ebony and her team cover this gap in our** **customer story**.

The Candidate Experience

First impressions matter. Sterling's Hiring Reimagined report found that a majority of candidates (59%) felt more confident about working with the organization or pursuing the job based on their background check experience. Specifically, **candidates found the most value in a background check process that is reflective of the organization's culture and values.**

It's become increasingly important for employers to authentically express their culture and values early and often throughout the hiring process. In this way, **new employees are more likely to feel that they can bring their full selves to work, and that they'll have a strong emotional connection with their new company**.

One way your organization can showcase its corporate values to candidates is by using the latest background check tools, such as identity verification. By verifying that candidates really are who they say they are upfront, employers confirm important hiring criteria are met.

In this way, **your organization can demonstrate to your candidates that they're applying to work for a modern, forward-thinking company prioritizing a safe workplace, which in turn builds trust**.

59%

of candidates felt more confident about working with the organization or pursuing the job based on their background check experience.
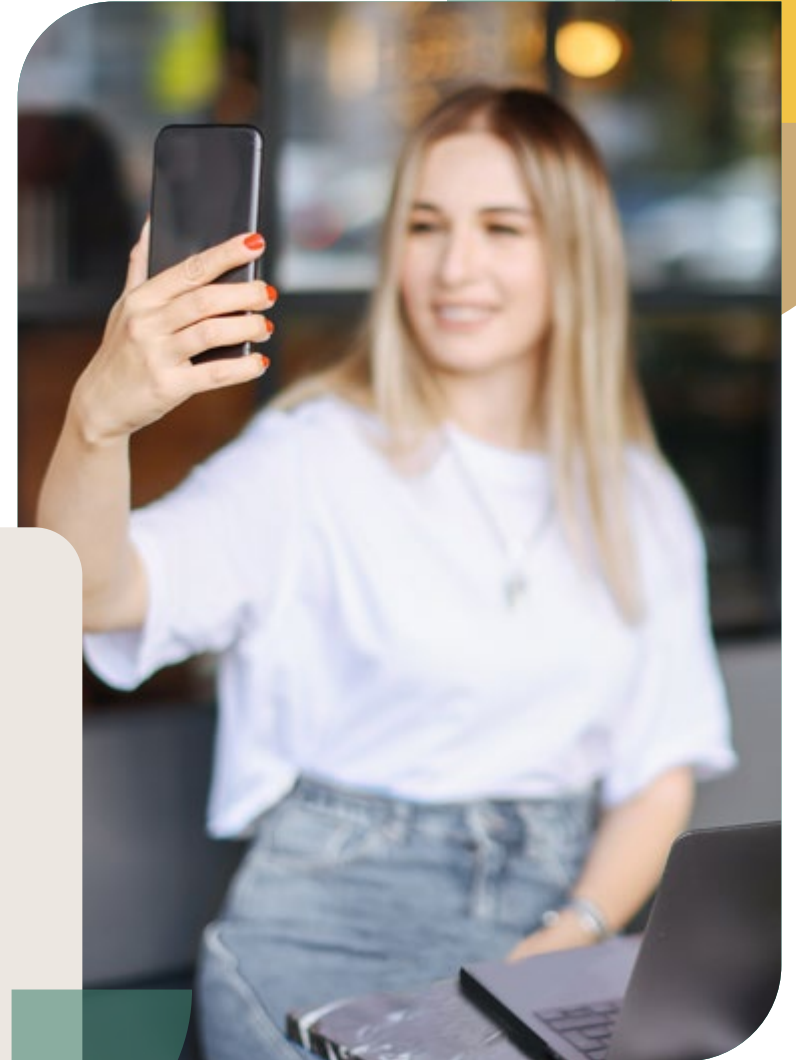
The Candidate Experience and Onboarding

Onboarding is the final stage in the candidate experience. Your new hires are already a part of the team as they busily find their way around the office (or company intranet), finish their onboarding paperwork, and take part in Day One activities. All these are just a few ways in which onboarding solutions have an immediate impact on candidate experience and overall organizational success.

When onboarding goes well, company culture and employee engagement benefit. However, poor onboarding puts employee morale at risk from the very beginning. According to Talent Board's 2022 North American Candidate Experience Benchmark Research Report, onboarding is the top priority of talent acquisition (TA) teams in 2023. However, for onboarding to be impactful, it's important to first create a positive candidate experience from start to finish.
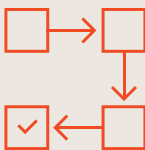
A Strategic Approach Should Include:

Putting People First
Verify candidate identity during the pre-onboarding phase to demonstrate your commitment to creating a safe and authentic workplace.

Engaging Early
Engaging with candidates prior to their first day can get them excited and help increase employee retention.

Making the Process Easy
All required forms, tasks, and processes should be automated to provide your new employees with the information they need to start.

Actioning Feedback
Understanding and acting upon candidate feedback can improve candidate experience and retention in the long run.

Day One: The Journey Begins

Hiring is a celebration for both the new hire and the entire organization.

It's important for all involved to help make sure that the expectations and promises discussed during the interview process come to life, leading to a successful and meaningful relationship between you (as the employer) and your new employee.
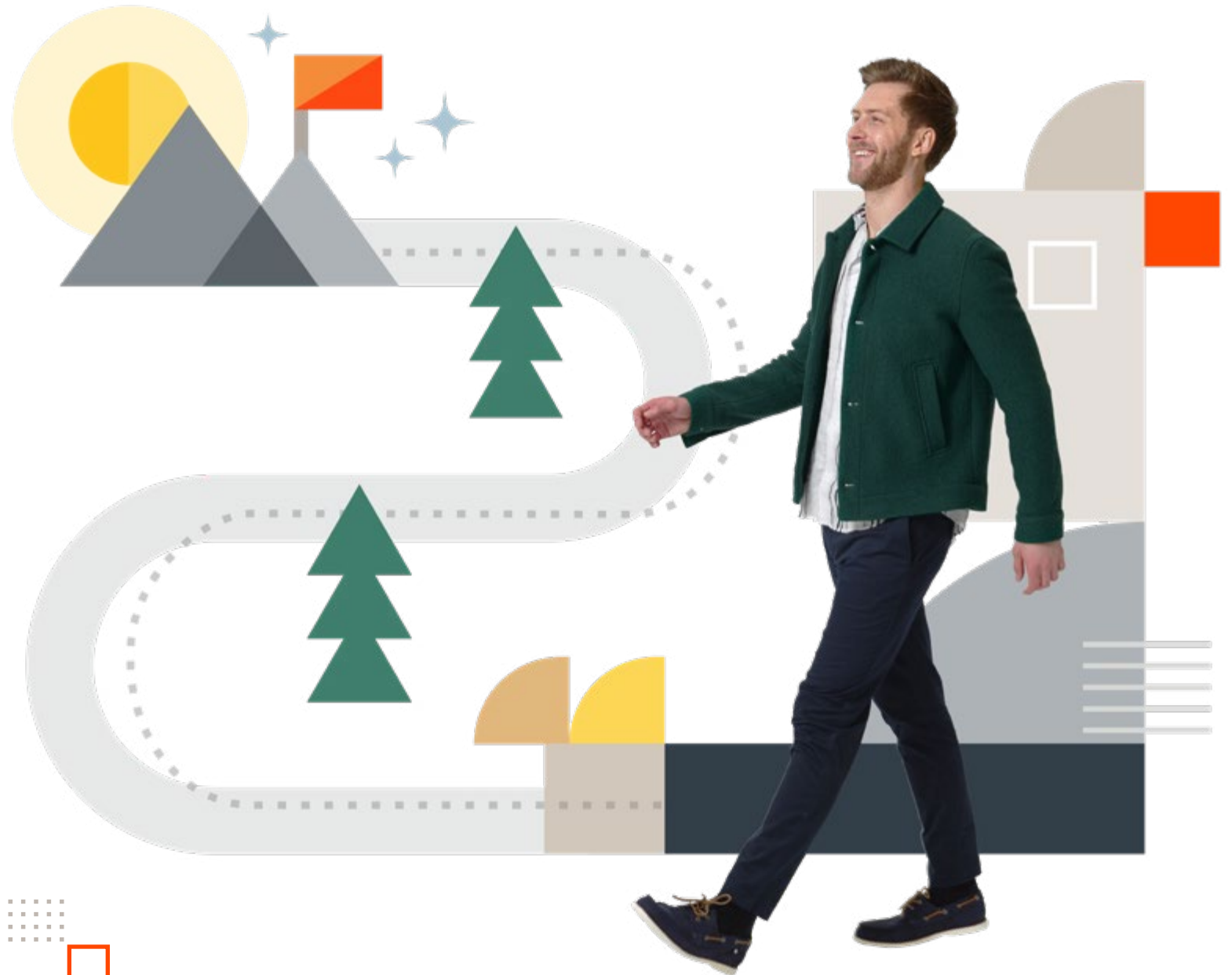
Defining Onboarding

At its most effective, onboarding helps you take the next step with your candidates by communicating a cohesive, compelling employer brand story. The onboarding process engages and socializes your new hires from the moment they join your team, while laying the groundwork for your new employees to quickly become productive and successful team members.

Remember, your new hires shouldn't have to do this alone. Arrange for a work "buddy" to give them a guided tour of your workplace (or a virtual tour of the company intranet, for remote workers), and offer a mentor program so they can develop both hard and soft skills as part of their employee experience. Interpersonal connections like these help to enhance and humanize the onboarding experience, especially for new employees onboarding remotely.

■ **Fun activities can help make Day One special, such as:**

A first-day gift bag and welcome packet

A helpful orientation, Q&A, or training session

A team lunch (or a virtual gathering)

A get-to-know-you exercise

A meet-and-greet with the team and/or leadership

Most employees decide whether to stick with a job within the first six months. Day One is where the rubber meets the road.

Make your first impression a good one!

Get the full checklist on page 22 →

Impact of Onboarding to the Bottom Line

It's important to invest in an engaging onboarding program that bridges the gap between recruiting and a new hire's transition to a full-fledged employee.

Read on to discover how an effective onboarding experience impacts the bottom line.

The ROI of Onboarding

How does an effective onboarding experience impact the bottom line?

■ Brand Perception and Loyalty

Talent Board's 2022 report stated that "Candidates who said they had a 'negative' overall experience tell us every year they will take their alliances, product purchases, and business relationships somewhere else."

■ Performance Impact

Your new hires are more likely to feel they're already part of your workplace culture after having had a helpful and timely onboarding experience, which can boost employee engagement.

■ Recruitment Success

A positive experience (lasting from the initial offer to onboarding) can mean new hires "are more productive in their first few weeks and may be more likely to stay with their new employer," according to Talent Board's report.

■ Team Empowerment

Aided by a technology-enabled background check, your talent acquisition and HR teams can spend less time wrangling paperwork and more time creating empowering onboarding programs for your new employees.
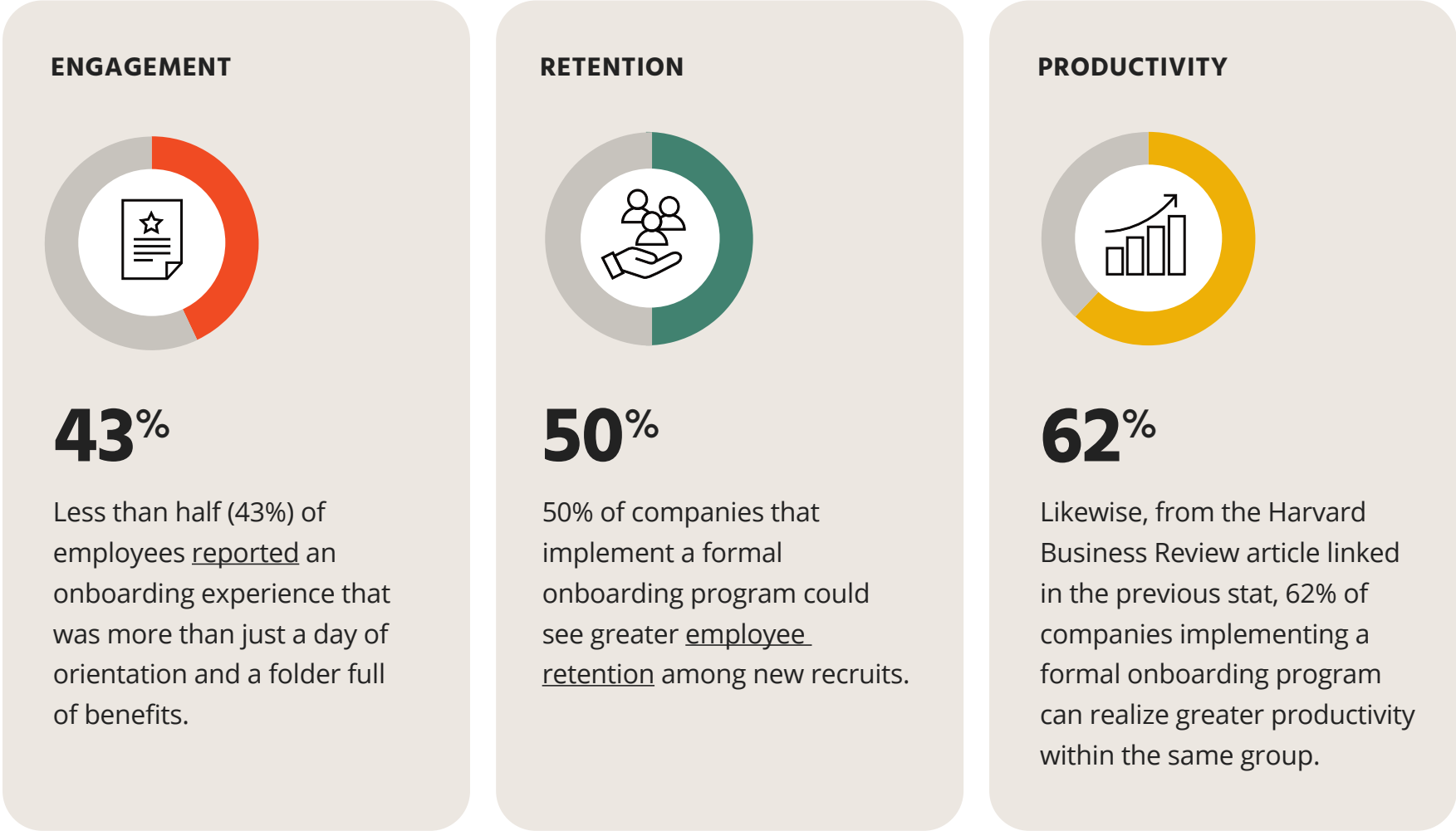
■ Brand Reputation

People are sure to ask your new hire, "How's the new job?" Thanks to Glassdoor, Facebook, Twitter, and other social channels, after a great candidate experience, your brand's reputation will be strengthened and is more likely to be promoted publicly by your excited new employee.

Onboarding's Impact on Employer Brand Loyalty

Successful employee onboarding programs will have a positive impact on your employer brand. Onboarding helps an organization attract and retain the best talent and empowers the HR team to focus on finding, recruiting, and securing the most promising candidates for the company.

Effective onboarding tells a cohesive, compelling employer brand story. It provides the skills, knowledge, and tools your new employee needs to become a productive, successful team member for the long haul. Good onboarding practices can turn the new employee into a brand ambassador.

■ **Here are some typical areas where companies can make strides to achieve these business goals:**

ENGAGEMENT

43%

Less than half (43%) of employees reported an onboarding experience that was more than just a day of orientation and a folder full of benefits.

RETENTION

50%

50% of companies that implement a formal onboarding program could see greater employee retention among new recruits.

PRODUCTIVITY

62%

Likewise, from the Harvard Business Review article linked in the previous stat, 62% of companies implementing a formal onboarding program can realize greater productivity within the same group.

Candidate Experiences Must Be Transparent and Engaging

How can you help ensure a positive candidate experience? Sterling's Hiring Reimagined report survey found that 78% of job seekers indicated that "communication and proactive updates" are important in the background check process.

Your organization can use this finding as an opportunity to enhance the candidate experience from the start. For example, Talent Board's report found that candidates who had a "great" overall experience reported they'll definitely increase their employer relationships by applying again, referring others, and making/influencing purchases.

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of job seekers indicated that "communication and proactive updates" are important in the background check process.

Importance of Employee Engagement

In a global economy and with more people working remotely in a variety of roles, it's more important than ever to build connections, boost engagement, and improve the employee experience.

Engaging Employees as Individuals

Understanding and improving the employee experience is critical for companies operating in a global economy. According to Deloitte's 2023 Global Human Capital Trends report, **businesses need to keep up with evolving employee expectations by understanding and then championing the skills, motivations, and capabilities of the current workforce.**

Today, many organizations are investing in programs to improve the daily employee experience through additional perks and a defined work/life balance. However, this recent data suggests that there is more value to employees today in highlighting and improving the work itself. **Instead of only providing support or bonuses, companies should also seek to define and improve the job fit and meaning across the organization.**

All segments of the workforce — freelancers, full-time employees, contractors, remote employees, and any other type of employee — expect the employee experience to be designed to attract and engage them uniquely and specifically.

Start from their very first day on the job by creating onboarding programs which help employees engage with one another and understand how their roles work together. This helps your organization to cultivate meaningful relationships, which have a very positive effect on productivity and overall employee satisfaction.

The Empowered HR Department

Strategic Onboarding Requires a Fully-Empowered HR Department

The Human Resource team partners with its internal client groups to understand the needs of new hires and develop a process that will help the organization attract, onboard, and retain the best talent. An effective process is:

- Within appropriate timeframes
- Within budget
- Aligned to strategic business initiatives

For all these reasons, any business seeking to operate at its greatest potential needs a fully-empowered HR department. This means providing HR staff with the tools and resources to hire (and retain) the best talent. By incorporating technology and automation when possible, HR leaders can allow their teams to focus on developing relationships with new employees, as opposed to narrowing their focus to checking identity documents, completing new hire paperwork, or just filling out forms.

Does your onboarding process have room for improvement? You're not alone.

By getting more strategic with your onboarding program, you can boost your talent acquisition and retention efforts.

According to Deloitte, workers who felt their onboarding was highly effective are 18x more likely to feel highly committed to their organization. Deloitte also found that 69% of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years if they had a positive onboarding experience.

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How Does an Empowered HR Department Handle Onboarding?

Instead of laboring over each new hire's paperwork, top-performing talent acquisition and HR teams need to be freed up to focus on doing what they do best: finding, recruiting, and securing the best talent for the organization and building personal connections. To do this effectively and authentically, HR team members and hiring managers must devote time to creating dynamic and engaging onboarding programs.

THE RESULT?

New hires are immediately immersed in the company culture, making them far more likely to stay.

Onboarding Best Practices

Create a process that will optimize everyone's time, provide a smooth transition for your new employee, and set the stage for many years of productive teamwork ahead.

What Does an Efficient Onboarding Process Look Like?

■ Best-in-Class Onboarding Positions Your New Hires for Success

Centralize the Process

Whether it's HR or the hiring department, assign a single resource to oversee onboarding.

Automate Forms Management

When taking the next step with your new hires, don't overwhelm them with paperwork on the first day.

Align Onboarding Goals and Business Goals

Encourage hiring managers to provide meaningful work for new employees on Day One.

Articulate the New Hire's Potential Impact

Outline your organization's big goals and explain how your new employee fits into the big picture.

Create a 30/60/90-Day Plan

The 30/60/90-day plan is a transparent roadmap for your new hire, letting them know what your organization's expectations are for their first 90 days. The plan should have specific goals, dates, and defined colleagues to work with in order to accomplish these objectives. Having this plan will help your new hires enjoy a smoother transition to using company tools, understanding company processes, and understanding performance expectations.

Breaking down your new employee's learning process into 30-day increments allows them to focus on learning certain skills at specific times. Indeed, the first 30 days are often the most intensive, with training on product and company tools while learning company culture. Naturally, as the 90 days progress, the new employee's processes naturally become more fluid and independent.

Get the full checklist on page 22 →

What Does an Efficient Onboarding Process Look Like?

■ **Your 30/60/90-Day Plan**

30 DAYS

- Hold weekly managerial one-on-ones
- Share organization ("org") chart
- Have one-on-ones with team members to discuss their roles
- Learn company-specific platforms and intranet systems
- Set up meeting schedules with teams/manager going forward
- Attend team meetings
- Discuss project responsibilities
- Attend company-specific training classes
- Share product or accounts knowledge
- Set goals/metrics/KPIs

60 DAYS

- Get to know the company culture
- Collaborate with other teams
- Continue training
- Break down the steps of projects into phases: research, plan, and execute
- Identify any issues or pain points with the roles – develop plans to address and fix the issues
- Start "contributing to the conversation" more often
- Continue weekly managerial one-on-ones

90 DAYS

- Get feedback from manager on progress
- Continue weekly managerial one-on-ones
- Work independently
- Allow employee to become more self-accountable for their work
- Help employee be proactive and become more involved in the company
- Continue execution of projects
- Plan for future projects
- Continue training
- Build a career development plan
- Touch base with manager for feedback about goals/metrics/KPIs going forward

Onboarding Best Practices

Recent research has uncovered several best practices which spotlight areas where HR staff can improve onboarding:

Increased Brand Awareness

In 2022, Talent Board reported that **29%** of candidates are looking for additional information about company culture before applying. Many employers are now focusing on increasing their employer brand presence across career sites, social media, and review sites.

Faster and Easier Means of Communication

To streamline the hiring process and free up HR staff, companies Tidio surveyed in 2022 reported that their career websites got **95%** more leads by engaging with jobseekers through chatbots. Additionally, Tidio's study forecasts that as many as **75%** of HR queries globally will occur through HR chatbots.

Interview Preparation and Feedback

As Talent Board has found for over a decade now, candidates expressly want specific feedback following their interviews. However, **63%** of candidates they surveyed received no feedback at all after being rejected during the screening and interview stage, up **5%** from 2021. Only **6%** received assessment and/or test feedback about their results.

Employers who provide their candidates with specific feedback stand to benefit: Talent Board found that candidates were nearly **50%** more willing to refer others in 2022 after getting feedback. Candidates were also **40%** more willing to increase their relationship with the employer.

7 Onboarding Mistakes to Avoid

Sidestep common pitfalls of the onboarding process to create an engaging, positive first day for your new hire.

DON'T
Leave the new employee alone on their first day simply filling out forms.

DON'T
Assume that a welcome packet or email of instructions is the entire onboarding process.

DON'T
Schedule the first day when the new hire's manager is absent.

DON'T
Equate an orientation session with onboarding.

DON'T
Fail to provide basic tools of the job, including a ready workspace and login passwords.

DON'T
Leave new hires to navigate the office for themselves.

DON'T
Assume that no news is good news.

Day One and Beyond Checklist

A new hire's first day can certainly be hectic for everyone, but it's also a chance to celebrate a new team member joining the company. This to-do list can help you avoid last-minute mix-ups and set the stage for success.

■ Pave the Way for a Successful Day One

- ☐ Specify a start date and start time
- ☐ Create a warm welcome
- ☐ Ensure a seamless transition from the recruiting process to the new job
- ☐ Assign an office "buddy" to greet the new hire
- ☐ Arrange for a tour, if in-person
- ☐ Provide a small welcome gift that features your company's logo
- ☐ Work with the new hire's manager to set up a meet-and-greet
- ☐ Schedule with a list of other people your hire should get to know

■ Create a 30/60/90-Day Plan

- ☐ Assign a single resource to oversee onboarding
- ☐ Learn company-specific platforms, tools, and intranet systems
- ☐ Schedule training sessions
- ☐ Have one-on-ones with manager

- ☐ Discuss opportunities for your new hire to be paired with a mentor to support career development
- ☐ Set goals/metrics/KPIs
- ☐ Discuss project responsibilities

■ Provide the Tools Your New Employee Needs to Become Productive

- ☐ New hire should set up automatic payroll deposit
- ☐ Fully equipped to work: tools and equipment for at-workplace or at-home virtual environments
- ☐ Voicemail setup instructions
- ☐ Network passwords
- ☐ Instructions on how to resolve IT questions
- ☐ Building/garage access codes or cards (for in-office workers)
- ☐ Onboarding survey on Week 1 or 2 (complete with follow-up)

■ Infuse Meaning into the Experience

- ☐ Partner with the new hire to arrange meaningful tasks for them to complete
- ☐ Connect the dots: explain how the new hire's job relates to the company mission/goals
- ☐ Book weekly touchpoints over the first six months of employment

■ Involve the Entire Team

- ☐ Host a welcome lunch or virtual gathering
- ☐ Organize one-on-one welcome meetings
- ☐ Schedule an orientation and company overview
- ☐ Ensure time is scheduled with key leaders to share insight on company goals
- ☐ Send benefits enrollment forms as soon as possible – electronically and securely

Download the Checklist (PDF) →

Technology with a Human Touch

Successful onboarding is the result of careful planning and organization. By investing in online systems that help with tactical onboarding tasks, you can improve the experience for both your HR team and your new employees.

Before they experience the excitement of Day One at their new job, your new employees can complete the necessary forms and tasks electronically and securely.

Congratulations, your HR recruiters are now free to do what they do best: help guide your new employees, person-to-person.

Powering Business by Investing in HR Tech

According to Talent Board's 2022 Candidate Experience report, onboarding systems are still the main tech investment priority for companies in 2023, with 89% of companies reporting that they already have an onboarding system.

Attracting the right candidates is becoming vitally important as the candidate job market keeps evolving. To stay competitive, employers need to attract and source top talent. Many successful organizations have achieved this by creating an onboarding process catering to specific candidate needs by emphasizing a technology-first, user-friendly journey.

You can help start the journey upfront by incorporating identity verification in the pre-onboarding phase. Give your candidates proof that they're engaged with a company concerned with safety in the workplace and building an authentic culture.

89%

of companies report they have onboarding systems in place.

Top 9 Tips for the HR Software Buyer

The time and resources you spend on choosing a new onboarding software solution can be a daunting proposition. But with a little preparation, it can be painless. You'll see tremendous opportunities to increase ROI after you've implemented a system that fits your needs and makes your entire HR department run more efficiently.

1 Assess Your Landscape, from Candidate Experience to Compliance

Just as the saying goes, you can't get where you want to go if you don't know where you've been.

Start the journey by first taking a hard look at your current technology solutions. Identify bottlenecks and critical steps that negatively impact your team's efficiency. When examining your hiring process, look at every step from a typical candidate's perspective:

- What's the specific positive experience that you want your candidates to have? What will best motivate them to drive their engagement early in the process?
- What sets you apart from other employers, and how do you address the diverse needs of different generations?
- What exactly do you want your ideal software solution to accomplish?
- How broad and far-reaching does your software solution need to be in its capabilities?

2 Involve the Stakeholders

Don't make all these decisions in a vacuum. Think about all your colleagues who use your current systems, or whose roles would be affected by a new software purchase. The list is often longer than you might think. You'll need to involve all your HR end-users, your IT team, payroll specialists, and anyone whose responsibility touches this process, or whose job will be impacted by change. Also be sure to speak with new hires at your company to learn more about their experiences (possibly identifying areas for improvement). Executive buy-in is also critical at this stage. Consider suggestions for "must-have" features to be included in the final product. Finally, an ROI calculator can also help you to make your case to leadership.

Top 9 Tips for the HR Software Buyer

3 **Research the Players**

This task can be so intimidating that organizations sometimes hire industry consultants who act as "matchmakers" for technology providers. But there's no need to be overwhelmed. First just be sure to do some initial research and get some recommendations. LinkedIn groups and professional associations are great places to ask unbiased HR professionals what is (and isn't) working for them. Narrow your options down to a short list of possibilities. But don't just go for the tried and true – also look for innovators in the HR technology space. After all, an organization that hasn't updated its technology products in five years might not be adjusting to the changing landscape.

4 **Take a Test Drive**

After narrowing down your search, make sure to view a demo of the product and ask tough questions. During your demo, ask to "test-drive" the product yourself, rather than having a salesperson do it for you. View the solution from every stakeholder's perspective, including that of your employees. Ask what future releases will include. You might not want to wait for mission-critical capabilities.

5 **Consider Your Other Systems**

"Integration" means different things to different people. Make sure you understand the capabilities of any integration you're considering. If you need a custom integration, be sure that all software solutions are open to such integration, that they have been completely scoped-out, and that the complete costs have been identified and quantified. Optimally, look for certified partnerships between vendors that will ensure a seamless integration.

6 **Consider the Human Element**

There's more to a technology purchase than just the software and hardware. You need to feel comfortable with the human team supporting them. Specifically, your sales rep can give you a clear window into the company and its operations. Be sure you're entering into a true partnership (and not just a customer relationship) with another vendor.

Ask yourself, in the event you have questions or need guidance, will there be a team available to help you? Who will offer training to the end users? Your company's relationship with this provider is just as important as the technology itself, so make sure it's with people you already enjoy working with, and who will help you along the way.
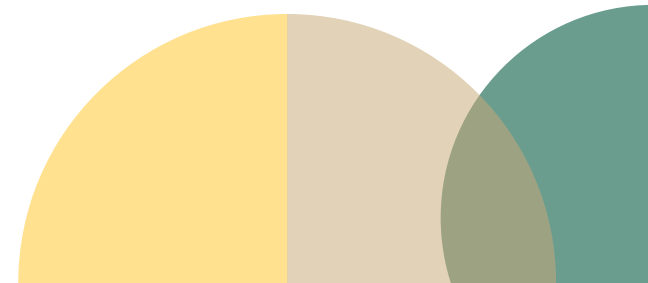
Top 9 Tips for the HR Software Buyer

7 **Should You Sign on the Dotted Line?**

Before closing a deal on any technology solution, make sure you've closely defined all the contract terms (including service and support). This is also the time to confirm that the scope of work given is aligned with your expectations. If these and other business-critical concerns are all accounted for, then you might be ready to close the deal! Congratulations. You've selected the perfect HR technology solution for your needs.

8 **Bring the Team Onboard**

Now it's your turn to educate your internal users as you begin implementation and training. A little planning will save time in the long run. You've chosen a partner that gives great support, so don't be afraid to ask for it. Make sure everyone knows

the objectives of the tech purchase so that any feedback or questions will be measured against them. Keep communication flowing freely during deployment and training in order to fully maximize efficiency.

9 **Measure Results and Report Findings**

Enjoy your new system while continually evaluating it. Measure your results to make sure your investment was worthwhile. Regularly communicate with your account manager or sales contact about best practices and software updates. Send feedback on future improvements or features that you'd like to see. Your new partner should be collecting data on the back-end and sharing it with you. Make sure you're using it to your advantage. Finally, proudly present the results of your analysis to your executive team.
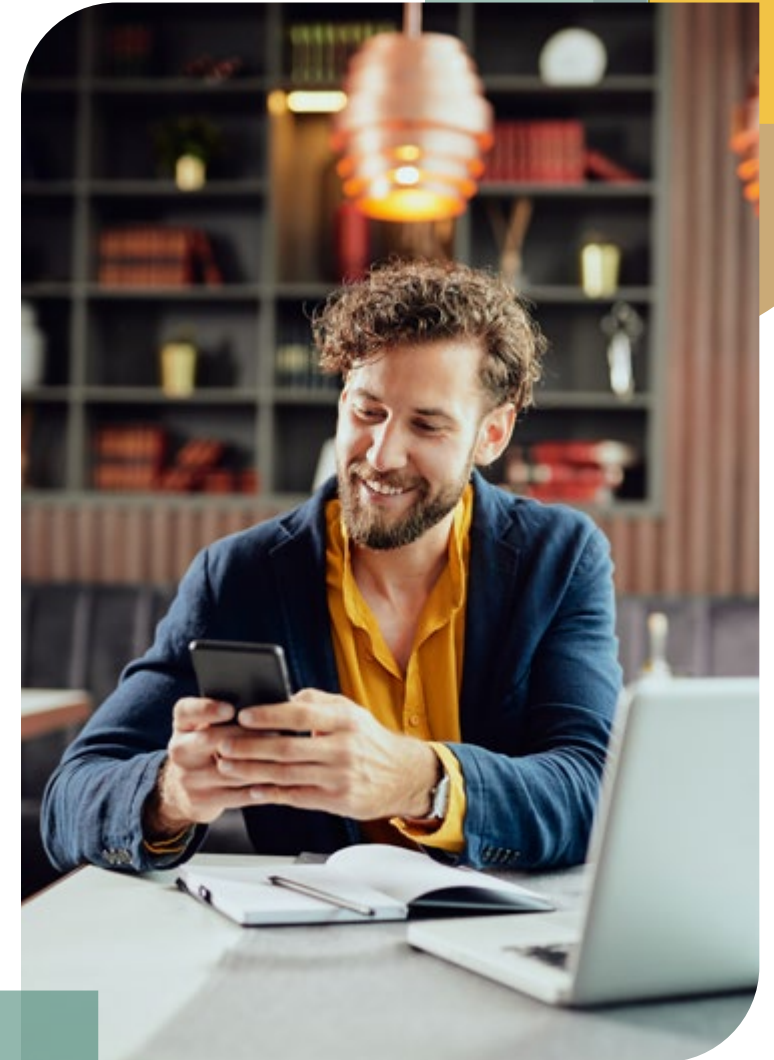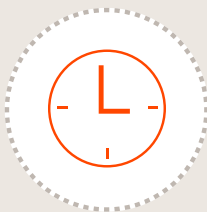
Measuring Success

Before you invest in creating or updating an onboarding system, it's important to know what impact you intend to make. An automated system can save HR staff many hours of manual paperwork, but there are other KPIs to track.

■ **The Most Common Metrics for the Success of an Onboarding Program:**

Length of time from offer letter to start.

Retention and turnover rates.

Time required to process hiring paperwork.

Recruiting and hiring costs.

Error rates on hiring forms.

Employee engagement score.

About Us

Sterling (NASDAQ: STER) is a leading global provider of background and identity services, helping over 50,000 clients create people-first cultures built on a foundation of trust and safety. Sterling's tech-enabled services help organizations across all industries and regions establish great environments for their workers, partners, and customers. With operations in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific, and Latin America, Sterling conducted more than 110 million searches in the 12 months ending December 31, 2022.

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In addition to this report, Sterling regularly publishes insight on the latest trends in human resources, talent management, and hiring.

For more information, visit us at: sterlingbackcheck.ca.

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